23 December 2021 - With generous support from the oPt Humanitarian Fund, the European Union Humanitarian Aid and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) completed the first of a series of Mass Casualty Management training for Shifa hospital's emergency department in Gaza. It is the first of its kind in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The training targeted high-level representation of the hospital and included the hospital's general director, heads of emergency and surgical departments, and the administration of the medical complex.

The occupied Palestinian territory has faced numerous conflicts in densely populated urbanised areas, often resulting in large numbers of civilian casualties. Recently this has manifested in over 2,200 injuries in the Gaza Strip and 261 deaths over a period of 11 days[1] during the May 2021 escalation of hostilities, topping the already existing 36,143 injuries and 214 deaths resulting from the 15 month-long Great March of Return mass demonstrations
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WHO pro-actively supports building the capacity of the public health system to manage large numbers of casualties at the same time beyond the system's usual capacity. This will be made possible by enhancing emergency preparedness and response by expanding the Mass Casualty Management knowledge, attitude, practice, and concepts at the emergency department level and collectively addressing the complete cycle of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Commenting on its importance, Dr. Mohammed Attar, Head of Emergency Unit at the General Hospitals' Administration and an active participant of the Mass Casualty Management training, said: " the training is a priority and a dream to us. We are convinced that the emergency system

in hospitals is in dire need to this kind of knowledge and practice".

Palestinian medical leaders were trained to manage large influx of mass casualty incidents, addressing the systemic gaps in mass casualty management. Through this unprecedented activity, the World Health Organization has initiated a process for establishing the minimum standard operational procedures for MCM at the emergency departments' level.

The training was planned, organized and delivered by MCM certified WHO experts, with technical support from the WHO Academy and coordination with the Trauma Operational and Advisory Team TOpAT from the WHO regional office. The training course will be delivered to the main public hospitals in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Dr. Mohammed Attar added: "If continued and if its protocols are adopted, the training will positively affect the emergency departments. Our gratitude is extended to the WHO team Dr. Gargavanis, Dr. Abu Teir and Dr. Abu Olwan) for their continuous support".

For further information

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[1] OCHA oPt: The Humanitarian Bulletin | Gaza after the May escalation - November 2021

[2] Two years on: people injured and traumatized during the “Great March of Return” are still struggling

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